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SUBJECT: REPORT ON OUTREACH TO DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS AND
DISSIDENTS (URUGUAY)

REF: A. STATE 44903
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11. (U) Per reftels, please find below a summary of Embassy's outreach and activities over the last year on the President's Freedom Agenda.

Context

12. (U) Uruguay is a free and democratic country. A 2007 survey by "the Economist" magazine rated Uruguay as the only country in South America to enjoy "full democracy." Similarly, the Bertelsmann Foundation recently placed Uruguay and Chile at the top of its list of 125 countries in democratic transition. Uruguay does not host significant refugee, dissident or exile communities from un-free countries. Its non-governmental organizations (NGOs) generally do not focus on the plight of un-free countries, despite our attempts to engage them on this issue.

13. (U) Instead, Uruguay's NGOs, activists and its Government are intently focused on past human rights issues as they relate to Uruguay's 1973-85 period of military dictatorship when security forces committed serious human rights violations in their campaign against violent insurgents and their sympathizers. Some Uruguayans blame the U.S. for indirectly supporting the region's military governments during the Cold War. The complex history of the dictatorship created heroes and villains for both the left and right. Some of the persons involved -- including former Tupamaro guerrillas -- are still active in politics today. The real and imagined lessons from the dictatorship period continue to haunt modern politics, including the Uruguayans' perception of the U.S., especially where the Global War on Terrorism, Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo are concerned. In some quarters support for the Cuban regime is very strong. This situation presents some challenges in our discussions on human rights and democracy; for this reason the Embassy has opted for an indirect method of pursuing the President's Freedom Agenda.

Advancing the Freedom Agenda

14. (SBU) Though led by a left-leaning government, Uruguay shares many of our values and is a conspicuous island of democratic stability and good governance in this turbulent region. President Bush's 2007 visit to Uruguay sent a powerful signal to the region that the U.S. favors good relations with sensible, pragmatic governments that respect democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, regardless of their political label. Taking a cue from the President, we have publicly and privately promoted Uruguay's solid democracy in order to contrast it against the fallacies and failed economic recipes of the regimes in countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba, and Nicaragua. The Ambassador has highlighted Uruguayan democracy and rule of law in several

op-eds published in major dailies during the past year. In addition, he regularly issues statements stressing the likemindedness of Uruguay and the U.S. to these democratic values, implicitly contrasting Uruguay with unfree regimes in the hemisphere.

¶5. (SBU) Meanwhile, we have continued to deliver to the GOU many official demarches related to human rights and freedom. We have backed Uruguay's robust international peacekeeping operations (PKO) in countries that are challenged by freedom issues, such as DROC and Haiti, by providing training and equipment in support Uruguay's continued role. We successfully arranged the travel to the U.S. of a Cuban paramedic who sought asylum in Uruguay.

Baxter